

REMARKS

Claims 1-25, all the claims pending in the application, stand rejected. Claims 2, 4, 18 and 23 are amended. Claim 1 is cancelled.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3, 17, 19 and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Roskowski et al (5,624,316). This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

The present invention is concerned with games that are executable in multiple stages and, thus, are so complicated that players require assistance in mastering the final stages. Rather than providing mastery information in hard copy, the present invention uses hardware to distribute "mastery information." In particular, a mastery support apparatus has the capability of making clues efficiently available as soft copy to game participants at remote sites. The information may be distributed by the mastery support apparatus to individual participants on the basis of the current stage being played in a given multi-stage game by the participant. The capability of the player also may be a factor in determining the type of information that is distributed to that player's terminal.

In particular, the mastery support apparatus provides mastery information with regard to the current one of the multiple stages at which the participant is playing, and the mastery information may be stored according to stage and game in a table (see Fig. 6). Thus, there is an interaction between the distribution apparatus and the terminal apparatus such that the mastery information can indicate a stage among multiple stages of the executable multi-stage game to which a player has proceeded. For example, the mastery status information from the terminal apparatus includes flag information indicating a stage of the game to which the player has advanced (see Figs. 7). Also, the invention includes a ranking information distribution device, which distributes ranking information pertaining to a rank of a player in the game. The ranking information and player ID are considered in storing mastery information in a table (see Fig. 9) and determining the mastery information that is to be delivered (see Fig. 10). This combined use of ranking information and mastery information is a unique feature of the present invention.

The terminal apparatus can comprise a first terminal device having a game execution function, and a second terminal device displaying received mastery information within a display area, as illustrated in Fig. 13. The distribution of mastery information and ranking information can be determined according to the mastery status information from the first terminal device.

Roskowski et al

The newly cited patent to Roskowski et al relates to a video game enhancement apparatus 4 that is placed between a conventional game cartridge 1, having a first memory with executable game logic, and a video game console 7 having a processor 33 and monitor 12, as illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2. The apparatus 4 has an internal modem 24 for coupling to a phone line interface 11 or an interface 45 for a smart card 15, both of which can provide additional game code information that is distributed from an external source and enhances the performance of the cartridge-type video game system. As explained at col. 5, lines 62, when the cartridge is supported by an on-line service using the modem, the enhancer 4 will dial up the service, download the appropriate game enhancing software from the service into a RAM 27, and then hang up. Further, as mentioned at col. 6, line 10, the on-line service can find other users with game enhancers who can play the same game on the basis of a direct connection between the users.

The apparatus 4 includes an interface for coupling to the first memory and a second memory 27 with executable enhancement logic, as well as additional control logic. The control logic includes logic for initiating an exceptional access mode and logic for terminating an exceptional access mode. The initiation of an exceptional access mode is based upon detecting access to a patch address by the processor, logic for directing the processor to access an exception region in the second memory upon detection of the access to the patch address, a redirection logic for redirecting access from the first memory to the second memory for a plurality of memory accesses in the exceptional access mode. The termination of the exceptional access mode is based upon logic that detects access by the processor to a transition address, with logic to redirect the access from a second memory to a first memory. Thereafter, the processor continues with execution of the original game logic.

Other enhancements that can be provided to the video game cartridge 1, based on data down loaded from the on-line service, include **“offering game hints and playing tips,”** as stated at col. 6, line 42. However, no other disclosure of the nature of the “hint and tips” service is provided. Specifically, there is no discussion of any interactive exchange between the enhancer and the cartridge or processor as the game progresses level by level, nor is there any discussion that the current level of a game and the ranking information of a player are considered when determining what mastery information will be provided. Further, there is no teaching or suggestion, especially at the locations in Roskowski et al identified by the Examiner, that a “second terminal apparatus” of the type illustrated in Fig. 13 and disclosed at pages 22-24 of the present application is used, or even that a second display can provide the mastery information to a player as the game is played and displayed on the first terminal apparatus. Only one display is taught in Roskowski.

The rejection of independent claim 1 is rendered moot by its cancellation. Claim 2 is now placed in independent form, as it adds a limitation to distribution on the basis of mastery status information, which is not taught by Roskowski et al. Thus, claims 2 and 3 should be patentable.

As to claim 17, there is an express statement in the claim that the mastery information advises a player how to master an executable multi-stage game according to the particular stage of multiple stages then being executed. Nothing in Roskowski et al teaches the provision of mastery information according to a current stage being executed. Moreover, as to claim 19, which is directed to the two terminal arrangement of Fig. 13, there is nothing in Roskowski that teaches two terminals, one for game execution and the second for mastery support information. Thus, claim 17 and dependent claim 19 are not anticipated by Roskowski et al.

Finally, as to claim 23, the invention is now defined as related to a game that is executable in stages with the mastery information being distributed on a stage-by-stage basis. With this change, the claim is not anticipated.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 4-12, 18, 20, 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Roskowski et al in view of Lee (6,475,089). This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

First, the deficiencies of Roskowski et al in anticipating the claimed invention have been demonstrated. Lee does not remedy these deficiencies, as Lee does not concern the transmission of “mastery information” according to stages of a game execution, thereby failing to teach the critical features of claims 5 and 6.

Moreover, Lee does not provide the added limitations that are provided by the rejected claims, such as the distribution of mastery information on the basis of the ranking of a player, as in claim 4, or the determination of a rank of a corresponding user with reference to accumulated mastery status information, as in claims 7-9. Further, there is no teaching of the first and second terminal devices, as in claims 10-12.

Lee simply concerns a game system with a plurality of game devices 2a, 2b, which are connected to a host computer 3. Each game device can issue requests for a game and receive and return information on an opponent selected by the host. After obtaining opponent information, the game devices are cut off from communication with the host and a competition type game is implemented between the game devices 2a and 2b by way of a communication line 5a. Nothing in the disclosure concerns “mastery information,” and in particular, the provision of any mastery information on the basis of the stage at which individual executable multi stage games are being executed at individual terminals. This limitation is present in at least rejected claims 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12 on the basis of their dependency on claim 2 and in original claims 24 and 25.

Second, the Examiner admits that Roskowski et al lacks a disclosure of a ranking information distribution device that includes an accumulator that accumulates information from players, a determining device that determine a rank of a player with reference to the accumulated information and a distributor that distributes ranking information pertaining to the determined rank. The Examiner looks to Lee for a teaching that a host computer can receive game results and transmit back to remote terminals information on grades, ranking, etc. However, this

operation has nothing to do with the transmission of mastery information and, in particular, the interaction between a central apparatus for distributing mastery information and remote game devices that execute a multi stage game, with the mastery information being provided on the basis of the current stage of the game. Thus, a basic feature of the present invention are not taught in the combination of Lee and Roskowski et al. This feature is present at least in claims 4, 7, 10, 24 and 25.

Third, this combination would not be reasonable to one of ordinary skill in the art. Lee is clearly concerned with having remote terminals operate independently, after a host has established a competition between two terminals. Roskowski et al, on the other hand, does not involve a competition between players. Moreover, even if participation in a prize-based scavenger hunt is considered a competition, all processing is conducted through the host processor. There is no direct competition between terminals. Thus, the features of Lee with regard to transmitting game results back to a host computer and transmitting information from the host computer to the terminal during game execution are inapplicable to the system of Roskowski et al since in Roskowski et al, the host computer always has such information.

Claims 13-16, 21 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Roskowski et al in view of Lee and further in view of Sporgis (6,320,495). This rejection is traversed for at least the following reasons.

The Examiner relies upon his earlier analysis of Roskowski et al and Lee and acknowledges that Roskowski et al lacks a disclosure of a terminal apparatus that is a portable device. The Examiner looks to Sporgis for a teaching in Fig. 1 that a player may be equipped with a mobile wireless communication device in communication with a game master computer system. The Examiner considers it obvious to adapt Roskowski et al to a portable arrangement as shown in Sporgis. Notwithstanding this assertion, the deficiencies of the prior art in failing to teach distribution of mastery information, and the incompatibility of Roskowski et al and Lee would prevent this rejection from being considered reasonable.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the

Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
Application No. 09/919,807

Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

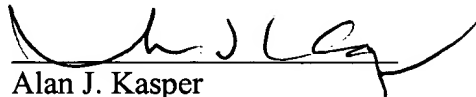
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